

Ford's Theatre

511 10th Street, between E and F Streets

Northwest Washington, D.C.

Metro Stop: Metro Center or Gallery Place-Chinatown

Please Note - Ford's Theatre Closure

Ford's Theatre and the museum are currently closed for renovations. The closure is expected to last through Winter 2009.

[National Park Service website](#)

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The Petersen House where Lincoln died is open for tours. For any additional information, contact the



In the spring of 1865 the Civil War had virtually come to an end, with the surrender on April 9 of General Robert E. Lee, commanding the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia. President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed April 14 as a day of thanksgiving.

On the morning of April 14, the [Ford's Theatre](#) manager was notified by the White House that the President and Mrs. Lincoln would be attending that evening's performance of the play *Our American Cousin* accompanied by General and Mrs. Grant. Word spread on the streets that the President and General Grant would be attending the play that evening and the theatre prepared for a capacity crowd.

After the Grants notified the President in the afternoon that they would be unable to attend that evening, Lincoln invited Miss Clara Harris, daughter of New York Senator Ira T. Harris, and her fiancé, Major Henry Rathbone. The Presidential party arrived about 8:30 p.m., after the play had already begun. At approximately 10:15, during the performance, John Wilkes Booth, a Southern sympathizer and actor who frequented and occasionally performed at the theatre and who knew the layout, entered the unguarded door at the rear of the President's box and fired a pistol at close range to the back of Lincoln's head. Booth escaped by leaping out of the President's state box, but when his boot spur became entangled in a flag, he fractured his leg as he landed on the stage floor. Booth managed to escape temporarily, but on April 26 a cavalry detachment trapped Booth in a barn near Port Royal, Virginia, where he was shot and killed.

Initially, many in the audience thought that Booth's leap to the stage was part of the play, but when it was realized what had actually happened, pandemonium set in. Several doctors rushed to the President's state box, but upon examining the wound, it was realized that the wound was mortal. It was deemed too far away to take President Lincoln to the White House so it was decided that he would be carried to the nearest bed. The President was carried to a small bedroom in the back of the Petersen House, a boarding house across the street from the theatre.



A solemn vigil was held throughout the night over the dying President. A continuous stream of Cabinet members, Congressmen, Army officers, and friends, as well as Vice President Andrew Johnson, appeared to pay their respects at his bedside. At 7:22 a.m., the morning of April 15,

1865, President Abraham Lincoln died.

The theatre was closed down and surrounded by federal troops to protect it from angry mobs who wanted to burn it down. The federal government purchased the theatre in 1866 and over the next 90 years it was revamped and used as an office building, warehouse, and museum.



In the 1960s the theatre was restored to resemble the 1860s design and reopened as an active playhouse in 1968 as a living memorial to President Lincoln. What remains of the original theatre are three of the main walls.

Ford's Theatre is an active theatre with evening and matinee performances.

There is a museum located in the basement of the theatre featuring artifacts from the assassination and its aftermath, such as the murder weapon used by Booth, Lincoln's clothing, and the flag that covered his coffin. Also on display are Civil War artifacts.

Times of Operation

Ford's Theatre, the Lincoln Museum, and the House Where Lincoln Died (Petersen House) are open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00p.m., except on December 25.

Because Ford's Theatre also functions as an active stage with live performances, there are times when the theatre will be closed to the public. Matinees usually take place on Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday afternoons, although rehearsals can take place at any time or day. Visitors are encouraged to call the theatre one or two days before visiting to confirm that the theatre will be open for touring. For the most current closing information, call (202) 426-6924, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Ford's Theatre Links

- [Ford's Theatre NPS Website](#)
- [Ford's Theatre Performance Website](#)
- [Virtual Tour of Ford's Theatre](#)

Places of Interest Nearby

- [National Portrait Gallery](#)
- [International Spy Museum](#)
- [Old Post Office Pavilion and Tower](#)

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